

Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker

CHURCH
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SOCIETY



Link Letter no. 20 | April 2022
churchmissionsociety.org/vandentoren

The call in action

Dear friends,

It feels strange to write while we are shaken by the sudden nearness of war, of people on the run and places being trampled on. War in Ukraine, ongoing insecurity and oppression in Myanmar, war in Ethiopia, violence in Eastern Congo and the Central African Republic. This is our world today. And at the same time, spring flowers are blooming, we enjoy new opportunities to reconnect with friends now COVID-19 regulations have eased, and our children are preparing their wedding. Yes, we read the news, yes we pray, yes we are seeking opportunities to help, and yes, our life seems to go on as before.

In the midst of this, I have had to reconsider my ministry. What is God asking me to do? In December we discovered that I have a (minor) heart condition. The doctors told me that even though there is no danger of severe problems at the moment, I will have to make choices in my lifestyle, finding more space for rest and recuperation.

But how do I choose? What do I prioritise?

Since last April I am interim director for a network of churches and mission organisations working in and from the Netherlands, comparable to Global Connections (but much smaller). Recently I have been asked to continue this for another year. I have been teaching online for theological schools in Asia and for an Anglican Church in Brussels. In Groningen we are investing in Het Pand, our Christian community in a wonderfully colourful neighbourhood that also has lots of serious problems. Benno and I are working to start a missional community house there, where we will live with other families and singles. At the moment there are seven adults and three (and a half) children. We call ourselves “Buurtgenoten”, which loosely translates as “neighbours in community”. Our dream is to be a community in the neighbourhood, with the neighbourhood and for the neighbourhood. We are in discussion with social investors and the local government to find an appropriate building to make our home. Then there are some theology students who have asked me to mentor them. There are sermons to preach. Lectures or talks to give...

Counting all this up, it became clear that choices need to be made.

Dirk, a good friend and member of Buurtgenoten, asked me about my mission statement: Living a life of mission, both locally and globally. For me, connection and community in diversity are central. Having had the privilege of living on different continents in different countries, meeting so many different people, discovering how God meets them in their context and shapes their lives, has deeply convinced me that we can only comprehend “the breadth and length and height and depth [of the] love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18–19) in meeting the other. If we are open to it – willing to learn and receive – our comprehension of God’s love in Christ grows.

How does this help me make choices?

The job with the mission council allows me to invest in relationships



Name: Berdine van den Toren-Lekkerkerker

Location: Netherlands

My call: Living a life of mission, both locally and globally.

My role: Resourcing Christian leaders in Africa and Asia through mission education, so that they can resource others for a life of mission.



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Teaching online – connected to India on this occasion.

with a special focus on the exchange of gifts and needs between the church worldwide and the local church. It allows me to support shared learning towards more effective ministry in mission.

Theological education towards mission has been the focus of my work for CMS. And here too, the relationships built over the years have never been just about teaching, but also about receiving and learning – learning that I can share here in the Netherlands.

Living in Groningen, and specifically being part of the community in Het Pand and Buurtgenoten, are deeply important to me. It is only in living together, in enjoying and investing in the relationships that grow from this shared life, that my mission statement becomes an authentic reality.

What did I decide?

For mission worldwide, I will continue to invest in theological education. However, travel will be reduced to one main trip a year, with a special focus on French-speaking Africa. This is where, over the years, our deepest relationships have been built, where I can contribute and receive the most.

Locally, Het Pand and Buurtgenoten will remain the most important focus. Other engagements will take second place, depending on the time available.

These two areas, in Africa and in Groningen, keep “my feet in the clay,” as we say in Dutch. They keep me grounded in real life. And they inspire me for the work I am doing for the mission council, which I will continue for another year.

These decisions have not come easily or on my own. Through the process I have realised how God uses the people around us in our discernment, to find wisdom, creativity and courage. Friends like Dirk, people like Benno, who knows me as no other, but also the wider CMS community.

During Lent we are asked to renew our commitment to the CMS community and its mission. We reaffirm being a member of the CMS mission community because God is still working in our world and we want to be part of this. We want our daily life to be about mission and we know that we cannot do this on our own. We need fuel for this journey. We need to travel this journey together. (For the full affirmation see: <https://churchmissionsociety.org/get-involved/welcome-community/>)

All of this does not take away the feelings of unease, pain and even despair when we hear about the suffering and injustice in places of war like Ukraine, Ethiopia and so many others. It may even heighten these feelings, because we feel connected to our brothers and sisters in Christ. And maybe, this is as it should be. While we go about our daily life and work, we cry out: Lord have mercy! Together we join in prayer with and for each other. Together we cry: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24) And together we may be moved into action in ways we could never have imagined.

With love,
Berdine



Photos from top to bottom: Teaching and learning in French-speaking Africa; Thinking about our values with Buurtgenoten in Groningen; Het Pand community – Samantha “coming home...”; Spring flowers blooming on our kitchen table.

GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

Pioneer Mission Leadership Training at CMS, designed by pioneers for pioneers, equips students for transformational mission in a dynamic and supportive learning community. Find out more at pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

You can give to Berdine at:
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